

East Jemez Resource Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes – November 7, 2002

Welcome and Introductions – Neil Weber (representing San Ildefonso Pueblo)

Neil Weber opened the East Jemez Resource Council (Council) meeting by welcoming new attendees, facilitating introductions, and briefly reviewing the meeting agenda.

EJRC Charter revisions and ratification – All

Neil Weber led a general discussion reviewing the final revisions to the Council Charter. The Council agreed to the scope and content of the revisions and the Charter was ratified. The goal was to attain as many Council member signatures as possible before the next meeting on February 6, 2003.

EJRC Chairperson for 2003 – All

John Mack, Chief Resource Manager for Bandelier National Monument (BNM), was elected and agreed to serve as the EJRC Chairperson for 2003. The Council expressed a sincere appreciation to Myron Gonzales and Neil Weber for their support as Co-chairs during 2002.

Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership (PPWP) Working Group Update – Ken Mullen

Ken began by expressing the PPWP's appreciation to Steve Bone, Superintendent of Bandelier National Monument, for agreeing to administer the Clean Water Act Section 319 grant they received in 2001. Ken reported that the last PPWP meeting focused on Pueblo Canyon Watershed recovery and potential plutonium migration issues following the Cerro Grande fire. He also announced that Craig Martin from the Volunteer Task Force (VTF) is scheduled to lead a community meeting at Fuller Lodge on November 7, 2002, to discuss the widespread bark beetle infestation and the implications for wildfire risk in Los Alamos County. The VTF is currently pursuing a tax-exempt non-profit status in order to be available to administer future 319 grants. The New Mexico Forestry Department commented that some seed money for watershed restoration-type projects was available through the Department and more information could be attained by contacting Nancy Neskauskas (505) 867-2334. Finally, Ken commented that the PPWP is currently re-evaluation their purpose and future direction and is considering becoming more active in promoting and implementing regional watershed restoration activities. The PPWP will be electing new officers in the near future.

Cultural Resources Working Group Update – Rory Gauthier

Rory reported that the Cultural Resources Working Group has been focused on plans to develop a multi-agency facility that would be used to curate regional collections of cultural resources. The Working Group is currently developing a white paper on the proposal and will be soliciting input and review support from the Council in the coming months. The primary issue associated with the proposal is acquiring funding. San Ildefonso Pueblo and Los Alamos County are currently evaluating a proposal for funding the construction and operation of the proposed facility.

Bandelier National Monument Erosion Assessment Methods – Cynthia Herhahn

Cynthia Herhahn, a graduate student from BNM, provided an overview of a project focused on evaluating and developing methods for assessing erosion associated with protection and management of cultural resources at BNM. The project emphasizes the evaluation of data that is

used to prioritize erosion mitigation and cultural resource site treatments through assessment of conditions, assessment of impacts and application of methods. The goal is to maintain continuity with previous recording methods. The erosion problems at BNM are attributed to historic land use practices that have resulted in suppression of natural fire regimes, increased forest densities, decreased sustainable herbaceous ground cover and increased rates of soil erosion. The resulting soil erosion is a direct threat to existing cultural resources. The project has a direct tie to BNM's piñon/juniper woodland restoration project that is the subject of an environmental impact statement currently being prepared. The ultimate goal and scope of the restoration project is to restore the ecosystem to a naturally sustainable condition through first mechanical thinning and then a natural fire regime. Details regarding the project to evaluate and develop methods for assessing erosion associated with protection and management of cultural resources at BNM can be attained by contacting John Mack at (505) 672-3861 ext. 540.

Regional Bark Beetle Roundtable Discussion – All

Los Alamos County

Los Alamos County reported that the impacts of the bark beetle are extensive. Management efforts are focused on watering and treating trees in parks and other recreational areas. In some cases dead and dying trees in these areas are being removed. A wide variety of preventative treatment strategies are being evaluated including appropriate pesticides, fertilizers and steroid/vitamin treatments.

New Mexico Forestry Department

The New Mexico Forestry Department reported that in the forest urban interface areas private landowners are eager to apply pesticides as a preventative measure for managing the infestation. Communication appears to be a key strategy for managing the situation and the Forestry Department is working hard to provide information regarding appropriate and productive strategies for private landowners to use. The Department is also evaluating the relationship between tree mortality from the infestation and the potential impacts associated with urban interface tree thinning projects currently being implemented.

US Forest Service – Santa Fe National Forest

Santa Fe National Forest is focusing on management of dead and dying trees within and near public access areas (e.g., campgrounds). The Forest Service is also allowing the removal of standing dead trees and is developing an information brochure regarding the causes and impacts of the infestation as well as management strategies. A Council participant asked the Forest Service what an increase in moisture would likely do for the situation. The Forest Service suggested that it is unclear what would happen but that there are now massive numbers of the bark beetle out there and meteorologists claim it will take several years of moisture to correct the situation. The beetle population is not expected to dramatically decrease any time soon.

Bandelier National Monument

Bandelier National Monument reported that the bark beetle situation has prompted them to modify their forest treatment strategy along New Mexico State Road 4. The forest thinning operations are now focused on dead and weak trees. Bandelier also reported that management of slash material from thinning operations is becoming a problem.

Department of Energy New Mexico Citizen's Advisory Board – Jim Brannon

Jim Brannon, Chair of the DOE New Mexico Citizen's Advisory Board (CAB), provided an overview of the origin and function of the CAB. The CAB is a publicly represented board that advises the DOE on decisions and operational issues. The New Mexico DOE CAB has contributed input on the clean up of Acid Canyon, mitigating wildfire risks associated with the location and management of waste storage facilities, and contributing to the development of strategies for accelerating the legacy waste clean-up processes throughout the Los Alamos National Laboratory site. The current "hot topics" for the CAB include groundwater quality issues, size reduction strategies for on-site wastes, removal of on-site wastes to other off-site facilities, and accelerated clean up of legacy wastes. The CAB encouraged direct input from the EJRC as part of a plan to increase the frequency and effectiveness of their outreach activities.

Round Table Updates – All

Santa Fe National Forest

Santa Fe National Forest reported that they would continue focusing on strategies for addressing the standing dead trees associated with the Cerro Grande fire.

Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership

Ken emphasized the PPWP's interest in receiving input from the Council regarding the future direction, function and activities of the Partnership.

New Mexico State Forestry Department

The New Mexico State Forestry Department reported that a new state government is expected to take over in January and that changes in the Department are anticipated.

Future Agenda Items and Closing – All

The following topics were proposed as agenda items for the February 6, 2003 EJRC meeting:

- EJRC Charter signatures and future direction
- Regional Bark Beetle Update
- Working Group Updates

Suggestions for additional agenda items will be solicited prior to the February meeting.